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ABSTRACT

Published six times a year, the newsletter keeps educators abreast of assessment studies; forthcoming reports; staff announcements, meetings, and services rendered; notes of interest; and publications. The newsletter allows for dissemination of current information of the National Assessment which provides data to measure student knowledge, skills and understandings in ten subject matter areas. The lead article provides findings from a recent report entitled: "Political Knowledge and Attitudes: A Special Social Studies Report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress" which shows that nearly one out of every four young adults in the nation is unaware that the U.S. Constitution contains a statement of his civil rights. Another article concerned with the report reviews misunderstandings about voting ballots among 17-year-olds and discusses comparative levels of political knowledge. Further reports in a series that will present survey findings in other subject areas are announced. Letters to the editors comment on a previous report on the teaching of reading. The newsletter is free to those on the mailing list. A related document is ED 073 007. (KSM)

Education Commission of the States
700 LINCOLN TOWER • 1860 LINCOLN STREET
DENVER, COLORADO 80203 • (303) 893-5200

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NAEP NEWSLETTER
NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

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Americans Lack Knowledge of Civil Rights

Not all Americans fully understand their civil rights or that these rights are guaranteed by law, according to data in "Political Knowledge and Attitudes: A Special Social Studies Report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress."

The report, released in Washington, D.C., Dec. 12, shows that nearly one out of every four young adults in the nation is unaware that the U.S. Constitution contains a statement of his civil rights.

Only half of the nation's 17-year-olds and young adults know that the principle of separation of church and state was the basis for the Supreme Court decision making required prayer and formal religious instruction in public schools unconstitutional, the report states.

The NAEP report is the first of a planned series that discusses the results of the 1971-72 social studies assessment of young Americans ages 9, 13, 17 and 26 to 35. It deals with those exercises that attempted to assess what young Americans know and what they feel about their civil rights, the fundamental principles on which the democracy is founded, the political process and functions of government.

Responses to these exercises indicate that young Americans generally support the concepts of freedom of speech, of religion, of the press and the right to assemble, although a number of individuals qualified their support of these rights when faced with specific situations in the exercises.

For example, one exercise presented to three age levels asked whether citizens younger than voting age should be able to write government officials or express their political views publicly. While most 13-year-olds (73 per cent), 17-year-olds (80 per cent) and young adults (77 per cent) agree with the statement, about one out of five adults is undecided or flatly disagrees. About one out of four 13-year-olds did not support the statement, 7 per cent saying that young people are not experienced or mature enough.

The data show only one third of the population said they agreed with the statement because as citizens young people have the right of free speech.

Other results show:

- For many Americans, freedom of religion excludes atheism. Two out of five of the nation's 17-year-olds and young adults contend that a person who does not believe in God should not hold public office. A greater percentage of teen-agers and adults in the Southeast than in the nation as a whole feel this way.
- A sizable number of Americans expressed reservations about freedom of the press. One fifth of the adults do not feel, or are undecided about whether, a newspaper or magazine should be allowed to criticize an elected government official.
- A number of Americans qualify their support of the right to assemble. "Many of the adults and 17-year-olds were concerned about the preservation of order, even if it meant the sacrifice of constitutional rights," the report states.

Exercises that measured young Americans' attitudes toward fundamental democratic principles indicate that the majority of respondents support these values.

For example, most young Americans want the responsibility as individuals to help make decisions that affect their lives. About three fourths of the 9-year-olds feel they would like to make decisions in school such as what a social studies report should contain, who they should work with on a project and whether or not they need extra help in a subject. Southeastern 9-year-olds supported this value more than any other.

According to results of one exercise, teen-agers and young adults (94 to 99 per cent) indicate a sense of responsibility for the interests of others. A picture

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TABLE 1. Attitudes Toward Picketing

Choices	Per Cent by Age 17	26-35
Rock festival		
Yes	53	63
No	41	31
Undecided	6	5
No response	1	1
Police station		
Yes	52	52
No	41	42
Undecided	7	5
No response	1	1

More young adults and teen-agers support the picketing of a rock festival than support the picketing of a police station, according to NAEP assessment results.

Ballots Present Problems for U.S. Citizens

Every U.S. citizen is obligated to exercise his right to vote, but results of the first NAEP survey of social studies indicate that many 17-year-olds and young adults are unable to use a ballot.

Asked five questions about the ballot shown in Figure 1, only 41 per cent of the 17-year-olds and 44 per cent of the adults answered all questions correctly, according to results in "Political Knowledge and Attitudes: A Special Social Studies Report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress," released Dec. 12.

The kinds of questions respondents were asked were:

1. If you wanted to vote for Kirk (a Democrat) for senator, could you also vote for O'Connor (a Republican) for member of the House of Representatives?
2. Could you vote for both Davis and Moss (both Democrats) to fill two positions open for councilman?
3. Could you vote for both Davis (a Democrat) and Merwin (a Republican) to fill two positions open for councilman?
4. If you were registered as a member of the Democratic party, could you vote for Laski (a Republican) for tax assessor?
5. Could you vote for both Kirk and Jones to fill one senatorial position?

Data in the NAEP report also show that only 17 per cent of the nation's 13-year-olds, 49 per cent of the 17-year-olds and 60 per cent of the young adults know that a presidential candidate for each major political party is formally nominated at a national convention.

One exercise in the survey asked teenagers and young adults what they would do to find out why a candidate for public office espouses a certain platform. More than half of the respondents said they would question him directly. Less than a quarter said they would research the candidate's background or past positions, NAEP reports.

A number of exercises in the survey ra-

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FIGURE 1. Ballot Used in NAEP Social Studies Assessment Conducted in 1971-72

	LEGISLATIVE		COUNTY		
OFFICES	SENATOR IN CONGRESS (vote for one)	REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS (vote for one)	COUNCILMAN (vote for two)		TAX ASSESSOR (vote for one)
DEMOCRATIC	Alan F. KIRK	John G. SMITH	Martha G. DAVIS	Peter V. MOSS	
REPUBLICAN	James M. JONES	Mary O'CONNOR	John RICHARDS	Michael M. MERWIN	Joseph L. LASKI

Seventeen-year-olds and young adults were asked five questions about this ballot. Only 41 and 44 per cent, respectively, were able to answer all of the questions correctly.

Many Lack Civil Rights Knowledge, But Support Democratic Principles

(continued from page 1)

of slum housing elicited concern for the physical and psychological welfare of the people living in the houses. The second most often expressed concern was for the appearance of the community.

When asked to suggest means for removing poverty, teen-agers and young adults (44 to 54 per cent) said quality education and training should be provided.

In one instance, the majority of teenagers and young adults (74 to 90 per cent) said that race should not be a factor in hiring someone for a job. What should be important is ability, they said most often. Adult females, more often than males, felt race should not influence employment.

In another instance, most respondents (70 to 87 per cent) supported the concept of open housing, but 30 per cent of the adults, both blacks and whites, either opposed or had reservations about open housing. The question asked if people who live in a neighborhood should be allowed to decide who can and cannot live in their neighborhood. Adults from low-income metropolitan areas showed stronger support for open housing than for other democratic values described in the NAEP exercises.

While the NAEP exercises on democratic principles did not imply that civil rights were involved nor require answers of this type, some respondents expressed an awareness that legal rights were at issue.

In responding to the question on open housing, 63 per cent of the 17-year-olds and 51 per cent of the adults said that an individual has the right to live where he chooses.

In a question about religious tolerance, 33 per cent of the 17-year-olds cited the right to freedom of religion as a reason for tolerance.

However, only 2 to 5 per cent of the respondents, ages 13, 17 and 26 to 35, cited legal protection against discrimination as a reason that race should not be a factor in hiring someone for a job.

TABLE 2. Attitudes Toward Picketing a Rock Festival, a Police Station or Both

Responses	Per Cent by Age 17	26-35
Should be allowed to picket either one or the other	69	73
Should be allowed to picket both	35	42
Should not be allowed to picket either	30	26
Should be allowed to picket both and recognizes constitutional right in both cases	6	11

While the majority of young Americans support the right to assemble, 26 to 30 per cent do not feel it should apply to picketing, social studies data indicate.

90,000 Americans Participated in NAEP Survey

Almost 90,000 young Americans participated in the NAEP survey of social studies in 1971-72.

This issue of the newsletter reports results documented in "Political Knowledge and Attitudes: A Special Report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress," which was released in Washington, D.C., Dec .12.

The special report is the first of a planned series that will present survey findings on what Americans — age 9, 13, 17 and 26 to 35 — have learned about human relations, geography, history and government and their attitudes about the concepts implicit in these subjects.

The exercises were based on objectives that educators, subject matter specialists and lay people from all sections of the country agreed were important goals in the broad area of social studies as it is taught in U.S. schools.

Exercises were administered to small groups of students and to individuals through interviews. Paper-and-pencil questions, discussions and actual tasks were included among the exercises.

Adults and out-of-school 17-year-olds were interviewed individually in their homes.

The social studies assessment is one step in the NAEP goal to provide educators and policymakers with reliable data on the educational attainments of young Americans. To accomplish this goal, NAEP reassesses each subject area every five years.

Other subject areas which have been assessed are science, writing, citizenship, reading and literature. Science was reassessed in 1972-73 and progress data will be available by mid-1974. Music results will be released in early 1974.

Survey Shows Adult Males Demonstrate Greatest Political Knowledge

(continued from page 2)

lated to functions of different government agencies.

Responses reported for 9-year-olds indicate many are unfamiliar with the responsibilities of the various agencies. Only one third, for instance, know the health department inspects restaurants, and little more than half (58 per cent) know that a mayor's chief function is to head the government of a town. However, more 9-year-olds, nearly three fourths, know that a judge is responsible for making sure a trial is fair and run according to the rules, the report shows.

Teen-agers and young adults are less familiar with the functions of the Supreme Court than they are with the responsibilities of local, state and federal governments. According to survey results, 35 per cent of the 13-year-olds, 71 per cent of the 17-year-olds and 62 per cent of the adults know that the Supreme Court has the power to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional.

On the other hand, most teen-agers and young adults (72 to 95 per cent know that postage rates and taxes on goods coming into the country are federal government responsibilities. The majority (72 to 95 per cent) know that garbage collection is a local government obligation. Fewer young Americans (71 to 84 per cent) know that state governments usually establish central universities.

Comparisons among the subpopulation groups identified by NAEP indicate that those from the Northeast, whites, those whose parents continued their education past high school and affluent urban citizens demonstrate the best understanding of the political process, civil rights and democratic principles.

When compared to the nation, southeasterners, blacks, those who indicated that the highest level of education for either parent was less than or only some high school and those living in poor urban communities demonstrate the poorest understanding of the subjects.

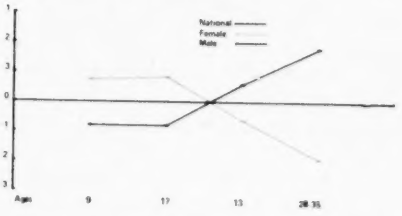
Females ages 9 and 13 were more successful in answering the questions than were males at those ages. But the results reverse dramatically at ages 17 and 26 to 35. Adult males exhibited a better understanding of the concepts involved than did adult females.

TABLE 1. NAEP Results Compared to Suggested Performance Levels

Exercise Description	Per Cent by Age 13 NAEP	Age 13 Panel	Age 17 NAEP	Age 17 Panel	Adult NAEP	Adult Panel
Know how presidential candidates nominated	17	41-60	49	>80	60	>80
Can use a ballot			41	>80	44	>80
Can evaluate politicians; get information	42	61-80	62	>80	69	>80
Know function of Supreme Court	35	41-60	71	>80	62	61-80
Support religious freedom for elected officials	59	>80	63	>80	56	>80
Support open housing			80	>80	63	>80
Support equal employment opportunity	74	>80	90	>80	90	>80

Young Americans rarely achieved the satisfactory performance levels established for NAEP exercises by a nine-member panel chosen by the National Council for the Social Studies.

FIGURE 2. Male/Female Performance Compared to National



Adult males demonstrate the best understanding of political concepts.

Editor's Note:
Copies of "Political Knowledge and Attitudes: A Special Social Studies Report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress will be available from the Superintendent of Documents at a later date.

NAEP letters

To the Editor:

In the September 1973 "NAEP Newsletter," I was encouraged to see that attention is to be paid to the improvement of the teaching of reading, but I must admit to a large degree of cynicism as to results.

I teach remedial English and corrective reading in a high school in San Antonio, Tex. I have an A.B. from Indiana University, nearly 50 hours of graduate work—the most recent of which are in the area of remedial reading. I have taught English conversation and pronunciation for several years in Japan and Okinawa as a volunteer and have taught in public schools for nearly six years. With this as background, I have several comments to make.

It seems to me that there are concerns to be met before the problem of marginal literacy can be solved:

1. Proliferation of "enrichment" courses in the primary grades resulting in a lack of concentration on reading and arithmetic basics.

2. Excessive, unguided exposure to inferior television with a resulting decrease in verbal skills.

3. Family-centered motivation in matters involving literacy. (If your parents rarely read and if in every matter concerning education the parents' attitude implies or states that the school is wrong, unimportant or overpowerful, your attitudes toward reading and/or education are likely to be apathetic or hostile.)

4. Awareness of all teachers, at all levels, in all subject areas, that there is a high percentage of marginal literacy in most of our schools and a willingness to make allowances for, and efforts to remedy, these difficulties in individual students.

5. Emphasis on and funding for (local as well as national) reading and allied academics at least comparable to that afforded the football program.

We are not without assurances of assistance—as long as our demands don't require much money or congratulations on a job well done, as long as our "retreads" are quiet in class and stay out of the halls and out of trouble—but the implicit attitude is one of "wait a few months or a few years and they'll drop out and we won't have to bother with them."

But these are lives we are dealing with, long years of just a little less than they could have, or be, frustrations piled upon frustrations every day for years in a way that many of us who are easily literate cannot possibly understand.

Many of these minds are eager—and hampered. Many of these attitudes are permanently warped, and we will all reap the harvest of the indifference we have condoned for so long.

Money alone is not the answer, nor is another bureaucratic program or foundation controlled by people who are not, or worse, never have been, in the classroom facing these legitimately accusing students—30, 40, 45 per class period. I don't have the answers, of course. Smaller classes would help, as would environmental motivation, peer group motivation, a little more money, a lot more caring. But, we must find some vital, practical, real answers to the multitude of problems that arise from a population heavily afflicted with marginal literacy.

Jane Wheeler Boling
San Antonio, Tex.

To the Editor:

The Chicago public schools are most appreciative of the cooperation of National Assessment in making available to us sufficient copies of the September 1973 newsletter of National Assessment focusing on the reading problem nationally.

You will be pleased to know that this newsletter has already been disseminated to 600 principals in the Chicago public schools, 27 district superintendents, three area associate superintendents, 11 Board of Education members and the staff of the Department of Curriculum.

This issue of the National Assessment newsletter was most timely because on Oct. 10, 1973, the Board of Education engaged in a four-hour discussion of the issues related to reading, and at the Board meeting of Oct. 31 an interim report on the most successful staff development program the Chicago public schools have had in the area of reading was reviewed by the Board of Education.

My deep personal appreciation to you for the effort you made to comply with our request.

Lorraine M. Sullivan
Assistant Superintendent
Department of Curriculum
Chicago Public Schools

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James A. Hazlett, Administrative Director

J. Stanley Ahmann, Staff Director

Vicky L. Trussel, Editor

Address Correction Requested

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